

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announces closure of 2019 horseshoe crab commercial fishery

2019 horseshoe crab harvest quota reached, dredge fishery lottery cancelled

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announced today that Delaware's 2019 commercial harvest quota of 159,211 male horseshoe crabs has been met, and that the horseshoe crab fishery closed at 12:01 a.m., Monday, July 8 in accordance with Delaware law and regulations. The fishery will remain closed for the remainder of 2019. A lottery for a horseshoe crab dredge fishery, scheduled for July 19, has been cancelled due to the fishery closure.

Horseshoe crabs are managed by the Division of Fish & Wildlife through an Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan. Annual allocations for the Delaware Bay area states are determined through an innovative adaptive resource management model that takes into account changes in the horseshoe crab population and in migratory shorebird populations dependent upon horseshoe crab eggs for food. Harvest of female horseshoe crabs is prohibited in Delaware.

Horseshoe crabs are harvested in Delaware for use as bait in the whelk (conch) and American eel commercial fisheries. Horseshoe crabs also play an important role in the ecology of the Delaware Bay, notably by providing migratory shorebirds with horseshoe crab egg forage that fuels their long-distance migrations to Arctic nesting grounds. The horseshoe crab's copper-based blue blood also is used in medical testing and

research. Delaware does not have a specific biomedical fishery. All harvested horseshoe crabs count as part of the state quota, regardless of use; once harvested, the crabs may be used for bait, biomedical or other uses.

For more information on the closure, please contact the DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife Fisheries Section at 302-739-9914.

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